

FULL COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Full Council held on Thursday, 13 January 2022 at 6.00 pm in The Place, Limes Walk, Oakengates, Telford, TF2 6EP

Present: Councillors S Bentley, L D Carter, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, N A M England, R C Evans, C Healy, V J Holt, M B Hosken, A S Jhawar, K Middleton, R A Overton, S A W Reynolds, P J Scott, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley and P Watling

Apologies: Councillors K T Blundell, M Boylan, A J Burford, S P Burrell, E M Callear, E J Carter, G H Cook, A R H England, V A Fletcher, I T W Fletcher, J Gough, E J Greenaway, T L B Janke, J Jones, R T Kiernan, J E Lavery, A Lawrence, J Loveridge, A D McClements, R Mehta, L A Murray, T J Nelson, G L Offland, I Preece, S J Reynolds, G C W Reynolds, H Rhodes, K S Sahota, J M Seymour, C F Smith, M J Smith, B J Thompson, K T Tomlinson, D R W White and D Wright

166 Prayers and Reflections

Mr Hezron Ottey, of the Telford Seventh-Day Adventist Church, delivered prayers.

167 Declarations of Interest

Councillor S Davies declared an interest in Item 9 as the Council's nominee to the Wrekin Housing Group.

168 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.

169 Leader's Report & Announcements

The Leader wished all a Happy New Year. The Council's budget consultation was open to the public and residents were encouraged to get involved. It was noted that the Council was possibly the only council in England to be offering a two-year council tax freeze, however, in line with other councils the Authority would be applying the 1% adult social care precept as mandated by government.

Despite having had the lowest council tax rates in the Midlands for a decade, it was recognised that the bill was still one of the most significant facing residents each month. With rising prices as a result of inflation, increasing gas, and energy costs, the Council called upon parish and town councils, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Fire Authority to follow the Council's lead and freeze their precepts. It was imperative that the Authority play its part in helping residents at what was a difficult time.

170 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor asked Members to note the report on Mayoral Engagements since the last meeting of full Council and noted thanks to the Deputy Mayor for attending several events over the holiday period.

Members would be aware that in January of each year, the Council hosted a Holocaust Memorial Day event. In 2022, this event would be held on 27 January and would take place online. The Mayor asked Members to be mindful of this and to take time to reflect during this period.

171 Public Questions

No questions were received.

172 Councillor Questions On Notice

The following questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 6.2.2:-

- (a) Councillor C R Turley asked the following question of Councillor S Davies, Leader of the Council:

I am delighted that Telford and Wrekin Council continues to support its service men and women and takes its Armed Forces Covenant role seriously and welcome the Calm Café recently set up for veterans.

I understand that Telford and Wrekin Council Leader Shaun Davies, together with other Council leaders recently joined the call by Dan Jarvis and Johnny Mercer MP to lobby Government to scrap visa fees for service personnel and their families, which could run to nearly £10,000 for a family of four. I understand also that the Cllr Shaun Davies wrote to both Telford and The Wrekin MPs asking them to support this amendment to the Nationality & Borders Bill which came before Parliament in December. Our country has long benefited from the sacrifices made by soldiers, sailors and airmen who travel across the globe to protect us and it was therefore extremely disappointing to hear that the Government defeated the amendment put by Dan Jarvis MP and Johnny Mercer MP. In view of this I would be grateful if Cllr Davies could please inform Council if our MPs heeded The Leader's call and supported this amendment.

Councillor S Davies thanked Councillor Turley for his work supporting veterans and service people. The Council was proud to be among the few councils to have gold accreditation for its work on the Armed Forces Covenant. Commonwealth veterans' visa fees had been subject to cross party condemnation and the amendment moved by Dan Jarvis and Johnny Mercer meant that Commonwealth soldiers who had served around the world would not have had to pay to remain in the United Kingdom. The Leader was horrified that the government had opposed the amendment and was

disappointed Telford and Wrekin's MPs had not supported it. If you served your country, you should not have to pay to stay.

- (b) Councillor B Wennington asked the following question of Councillor S A W Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, and Families, on behalf of Councillor A D McClements:

Covid-19 has already caused enormous impact on our children's education and the Government must act urgently to ensure our schools across Telford and Wrekin are as Covid-secure as possible. I am disappointed therefore to hear that only 7,000 much needed air filtration devices have been made available by the Government in England, with 300,000 classrooms in England alone, this is just a drop in the ocean. I welcome the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People, Education & Lifelong Learning's strong and robust representation to the Secretary of State for Education on behalf of all schools across Telford and Wrekin and wonder if she could give an update on any progress that has been made on this issue.

Councillor S A W responded that the Department of Education's offer of 7,000 units was woeful. The Cabinet Member was not aware of any schools or educational settings, in Telford and Wrekin, that had benefitted from the scheme and that none of the schools believed they were likely to qualify for the scheme because of the strict rules. To qualify, schools were required to monitor Co2 levels and demonstrate prolonged heightened levels of Co2; they would then be required to demonstrate plans to remedy this through building works at a later date. Schools did not have time to carry out this work as they were trying to remain open to provide learning for young people. The government's advice to open windows, coupled with rising electricity and gas prices, meant that schools would have to balance opening windows in the winter for air circulation with the increased price pressures of heating classrooms. Schools were taking matters into their own hands and purchasing their own filtration systems but this further strained budgets and distracted from providing education to children.

Councillor Wennington asked a supplementary question:

Have Telford and Wrekin's MPs lobbied the government on behalf of our schools?

Councillor Reynolds stated that she had written to the government to ask them to reconsider their plans but had received no acknowledgement. The Cabinet Member had also met with the Shadow Minister to discuss the challenges of Covid-19 for the Borough's schools. It was saddening that neither of Telford and Wrekin's MPs had been seen to take any actions on the issue and had not lobbied for Telford's schools.

- (c) Councillor N A Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor L D Carter, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services, Regeneration and the High Street:

Will the Council consider switching off selected traffic signals overnight?

Councillor Carter responded to state that the Council already did this in select areas where it was safe to do so. The Authority was open to suggestions for new schemes and would assess them on a case-by-case basis.

Councillor Dugmore asked a supplementary question:

Wouldn't this fit with the Council's climate change agenda?

Councillor Carter restated that the Council already had such a policy as queried and that suggestions would be considered on a case-by-case basis, safety was the primary concern.

(d) Councillor N A Dugmore asked the following question of Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services:

Can the cabinet member confirm that the recommended Council Tax increase ring fenced for social care provision of 1% for the year 2022/23 is discretionary?

Councillor Evans responded that the adult social care precept had been introduced in 2015 when the government decided not to make funding for social care available to councils. Instead, residents were burdened with the tax without a reduction to their general taxation. The comprehensive spending review and provisional local government finance settlement from the government both assumed that councils would increase the precept by 1% for next year. Due to the long-term failure of government with regard to adult social care, alongside spiralling costs, the Council had no choice but to apply the 1% increase.

Councillor Dugmore posed a supplementary question:

Would this be made clear to residents in communications?

Councillor Evans responded that she believed the Council already did this.

173 Cabinet Decisions Made Since the Last Meeting of the Council

Members received the report on the Cabinet decisions made since the last meeting of the Council.

First Homes – Local Criteria

Councillor N A Dugmore asked whether Cabinet was supportive of this scheme

Councillor R A Overton responded that the Council was implementing the scheme as instructed to by the government; the Council had extended the scheme's criteria to open it up to more local people. The Cabinet believed the scheme did not go far enough in securing the provision of housing on an affordable basis for those in the Borough who needed it.

2021/22 Financial Monitoring

Councillor N A Dugmore asked what the Council's deficit would be without the £15m Covid-19 grant from the government.

Councillor R C Evans stated that this grant simply replaced what the Council had had to spend. The budget was carefully managed.

174 Setting the Council Tax Base for 2022/23

Councillor R C Evans, Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services, presented the report of the Director: Finance & Human Resources (Chief Financial Officer).

A recorded vote was required.

For: Councillors S Bentley, L D Carter, S Davies, N A Dugmore, A J Eade, N A M England, R C Evans, C Healy, V Holt, M B Hosken, A Jhavar, A Lawrence, K Middleton, R A Overton, S A W Reynolds, P J Scott, W L Tomlinson, C R Turley, P R Watling, B Wennington,

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

RESOLVED – that full Council approve:

- (i) The calculation of the tax base for 2022/23 as at paragraph 5.6 and Appendix 1; and**
- (ii) In Accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012:2914), the amount calculated for Telford and Wrekin Council Tax base for 2022/23 for its Special Fund Area shall be as per the appropriate parish amounts detailed in Appendix 1 for the parishes listed in paragraph 5.7.**

175 Recommendations from Cabinet

- (a) 2021/22 Financial Monitoring**

Councillor R C Evans moved the recommendations. Councillor R A Overton seconded.

RESOLVED – that full Council:

- (i) Note the 2021/22 revenue budget position;**
- (ii) Note the position in relation to capital spend and recommend that Full Council approve the changes to the capital programme detailed in Appendix 3; and**
- (iii) Note the collection rates for NNDR, council tax and sales ledger.**

176 Governance Update

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services presented the report of the Associate Director: Policy & Governance.

The report detailed a number of governance updates which included: the approval of absences for reasons associated with Covid-19 for a further twelve months; the approval of two leaves of absence for a period of six months each for Councillors R T Kiernan and J Loveridge; the noting of new Cabinet responsibilities; changes to political balance following the December election to the Council; and the final item was and update on the intention to create honorary aldermen.

The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor D Wright for his work as a member of the Cabinet.

A brief debate followed, this focussed on the appropriateness of granting independent Members seats on boards and committees under political balance calculations

The Speaker stated that there had been a request to take Items 2.1-2.3 and 2.5 en bloc, with 2.4 to be voted on separately.

Items 2.1-2.3 and 2.5 were taken en bloc. The vote was unanimous.

Item 2.4 was carried by majority

RESOLVED – that full Council:

- 2.1 Approve the reason for non-attendance at meetings of the authority as set out in paragraph 4.3 of this report subject to the relevant Member notifying the Monitoring Officer of the need to rely upon it prior to the implementation of the ‘6-month rule’ described in this report;**
- 2.2 Agrees to review the decision made at recommendation 2.1 above by no later than 31 January 2023;**
- 2.3 Notes the updated Cabinet membership and responsibilities as set out at paragraph 4.6 of this report;**

2.4 Approves the allocation of committee seats as set out at paragraphs 4.7 – 4.10 and Appendix 1 of this report; and

2.5 Notes the approach in relation to Honorary Aldermen as set out in paragraphs 4.11 – 4.14 of this report.

177 Notices of Motion

(a) Councillor E J Greenaway will propose the following Motion:-

The motion was withdrawn, with the agreement of the meeting, and the seconder of the motion.

The meeting ended at 6.32 pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday, 3 March 2022